



United Nations  
Environment  
Programme



Distr.  
RESTRICTED

UNEP/WG.6/3  
12 January 1977

ENGLISH  
Original: ENGLISH

Expert Consultation on Mediterranean  
Marine Parks and Wetlands  
Tunis, 12-14 January 1977

DRAFT TECHNICAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE  
ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF MEDITERRANEAN PROTECTED  
AREAS, MARINE PARKS AND WETLANDS IN PARTICULAR

## I. PRINCIPLES

1. The Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea with long residence time for its waters. It is also a sea heavily utilized by man and, at present, a heavily polluted sea.
2. The Mediterranean is still a rich sea in terms of its most valuable long-term resources, namely, the renewable or living resources. However, the utilization of these resources on a sustainable basis is greatly endangered, primarily as a result of overexploitation, but also from habitat destruction and pollution.
3. The Mediterranean bridges two continents, Africa and Europe. Its marine resources - especially those which are pelagic or migratory - are the common property of many nations, and are of particular interest to those States which border the sea. Resource management requires integrated, jointly planned intergovernmental action, since actions taken by one government often affect the interests of another State.
4. Man's impact on the Mediterranean is variable. The most significant and often detrimental impacts are caused by dredging, coastal development, wetland and estuarine modification, bulkheading, siltation from rivers and pollution, in particular from land-based sources.
5. The Mediterranean is a three-dimensional space. It comprises a variety of ecosystems, each of which has a varying importance for the Mediterranean ecoregion as a whole and for its present and future utilization. Areas of particular importance, which may be termed critical habitats, and upon which rest most of the Mediterranean environment's productivity and character, may be defined as places where important life functions and special ecological processes occur. As such, their identification is vital for the preservation of both economic and cultural resources. Typical examples of critical habitats are estuaries, wetlands, upwelling areas and breeding zones which often have the highest natural bioproductivity on earth.
6. Aside from practical benefits, protected areas and reserves have an intrinsic value to man as blueprints of man's past and his hereditary link with nature. The recreational and educational value of these areas rests largely on this intrinsic value.
7. Environmental management in the Mediterranean region requires, inter alia, carefully planned zoning for various activities as a means to achieve a harmonious eco-development. A vital part of this zoning is the establishment of an integrated network of protected areas, such as reserves, marine parks and wetlands. In this way, critical Mediterranean habitats may be safeguarded and used as reference sites for research aimed at providing scientific information on the magnitude of change caused by man's intervention in the Mediterranean ecoregion.

8. The importance and significance of Mediterranean natural reserves in relation to the quality of life of people in the region is as follows:

- as breeding grounds necessary for the maintenance of exploitable stocks of economically important marine species, especially migratory fish;
- as reserves of typical and critical Mediterranean ecosystems;
- as reference systems for scientific research;
- as pools of specific genetic material and safe "sanctuaries" for the endangered indigenous Mediterranean species;
- as areas needed for public education;
- as natural habitats for birds migrating to, from or through the Mediterranean;
- as examples of valuable archeological and historical sites.

9. The designation of natural reserves and the degree of legal protection conferred upon them falls within the responsibility of the individual Mediterranean governments.

10. It would be desirable for each State to follow the same basic principles and guidelines for the establishment and management of natural reserves in the Mediterranean region in order to achieve a harmonious protection and development of the Mediterranean ecoregion as a whole.

11. The existence of protected areas - created in the interest, and for the advantage and enjoyment of the people - should not be viewed as damaging to the development but as a balanced compromise between the long-term economic and ecologic interests of these areas.

## II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The selection of areas to be treated as protected areas (such as marine parks, wetlands and others) must be based on biogeographic/geomorphologic facts, as well as on ecological, cultural and pragmatic criteria. Using this approach, an inclusive and representative network of critical habitats can be effectively protected which will ultimately contribute to the protection of the Mediterranean ecoregion.

2. Specific principles for the management of the protected zones should be defined and implemented by national authorities taking into account the natural boundaries of the critical habitat (zone) which do not necessarily coincide with national boundaries, divisions at the shore between land and sea, or even contour lines (for example, the conveniences of the 200 m. continental shelf contour, the low tide contour, or the 6 ft. wetland definition). Natural units should be defined by the properties of ecosystems relating to process ecology (for example nutrient cycling, system predictability and stability, migration, sediment transport, and current structure). However, marine natural units or those for migratory species are very large and dynamic. Single parks and reserves cannot include these units in their entirety.

3. Habitats and species result from ecological processes. Each must be seen within the framework of its support system. Thus critical habitats may be included in the core areas of protected zones, but each depends for its continuity on buffer zones. Management of the core areas will also depend to some degree on management of the buffer zones.

4. Therefore, a network of protected areas in the Mediterranean requires the establishment of a high degree of national control over identified core areas, in which man's deleterious activities, and in some cases even his presence, are minimized or eliminated. Core areas may be small or large in size.

5. The buffer zones should be managed in such a way that man's activities are ecologically-process-compatible. Buffer areas are almost always large.

6. The creation and successful management of protected areas require the following specific national actions :

- adoption and enforcement of adequate national legislation;
- designation of a responsible national authority supported by scientific advisory panels and regional boards;
- standardization of scientific methodology used in selection of protected areas;
- regulation of non-compatible uses of areas;
- formation of qualified personnel to manage each protected area.

7. National environmental education programmes should be promoted in order to increase the public awareness of the need for protected areas and to justify their continued existence for coming generations.

---

Detailed elaboration of certain principles and guidelines relevant to marine protected areas can be found in the proceedings of the International Conference on Marine Parks and Reserves (Tokyo, 12-14 May 1975) and of the Regional Meeting on the Promotion of the Establishment of Marine Parks and Reserves (Tehran, 6 - 10 March 1975).